10: d'Orleans--300 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 647, 662, 681, 695

"The administrative functionaries and the judges are appointed by the king, subject to the approval of the Siamese Commissioner. Justice is administered according to the traditions of what was known in the early ages as 'the judgments of God.' That is to say the oath is taken upon a silver cup or a sword, and holy water is given the accused to drink, and if the accused person has wrongly declared himself innocent the water will poison him or the sword will be thrust through him by a spirit, at night. It need hardly be said that the judges are not satisfied with this test, that is to say, they take care to inform themselves before the trial as to the fortune of the prisoner, and it is said that they are easily influenced by bribes.

The punishments comprise fines, the bastonade, penal servitude, and being put in chains, but torture is not practised."

114 and on cross checks between the Annals and family documents,
643* is an attempt to reestablish the facts. The exact correspond-
175* ence of the dates justifies us in thinking that it is as close to historical truth as possible.

175* ambitious princess and limit themselves to recording her crimes with-
643* out explanation or comment. It may be that her intrigues had al-
562 ready brought Lane-Kham-Dèng to the throne in utter disregard of the eldest son's rights, or, on the other hand, she may have been impatient /60/ to see this younger son, who does not seem to have submitted to her influence and whose life she may have shortened, placed on the throne.

Phommathat, king 1428-1429. -- Pak-Houeï-Luong, king 1429. Thao-Sai, king 1430.

643* Whatever the case may be, she was discontented with her nephew
175* Phommathat, the eldest son of Lane-Kham-Dèng, and had him de-
662 posed ten months after his accession to the throne, then slaughtered on the rock of Pha-Dieou at the mouth of the Nam-Khane. Then she gave the crown to her brother Kham-Teun, the fourth son of Sam-Sène-Thaï and governor of Pak-Houei-Luong, who reigned under this latter name. Five months later, however, Kham-Teun had ceased to please and was replaced with Thao-Sai, the third son of Sam-Sène-Thaï and of Nang-Keo-Yopha. Scarcely six months had passed when the king discovered a plot to assassinate him which had been fomented by his sister. At his wits' end, he chose to hang himself in the bath chamber of his palace.

Phaya-Khai, king 1430-1433. -- Xieng-Sai, king 1433-1434.

Then Nang-Keo-Phimpha let her choice fall on her nephew Gnou-Khone, the second son of Lane-Kham-Dèng, who was governor of the /61/ Muong of Xieng-Khai and who chose the name of his province as his reigning name. Phaya-Khai "lasted" for three years and then died at Pak-Khane, assassinated by the inhabitants on his aunt's orders. Khone-Keo, the son of Sam-Sène-Thaï and of Nang-One-Sa, succeeded him under the name of Xieng-Sa and died in the same way seven months later.

Third son of Lane-Kham-Dèng, king 1434-1435.

Lane-Kham-Dèng's third son (whose name is unknown) replaced him for a space of eight months. In order to escape his aunt's fury,

he fled secretly by way of the Mékong, but Nang-Keo-Phimpha 643*
learned of his flight and had him pursued and massacred on his 175*
raft a little way downstream from the capital. 662

We can only conjecture as to the motives which impelled this princess, fiercer even than a Frédégonde or a Marguerite de Bourgogne, to make such a hecatomb of kings. Was she a bloodthirsty despot, or simply a royal Lampito with an exasperated temperament? (1) /62/ We do not know, but it is certain that she /582/

1. Marriages between brothers and sisters were always permitted in the royal family of Lan-Xang. They were forbidden, on the other hand, among the common people.

finally inspired such terror in the court that there was no one left to intrigue for the throne, the last two sons of Lane-Kham-Dèng being too young.

Kam-Kheut, king 1435-1438.

It was then that Nang-Keo-Phimpha discovered the son of a palace slave girl who had once been singled out by King Sam-Sène-Thaï for her beauty. The young man, Xieng-Ma by name, conquered the Gorgon by his keen intelligence and a perfect knowledge of the events of the great reign of Oun-Hueun. She had no doubt but that he was her brother, and forced him on the court as sovereign under the name of Kham-Keut (golden birth). Whether the latter was a docile tool in the hands of the princess, or whether Nang-Keo-Phimpha became genuinely and profoundly attached to her creature, calm seemed permanently restored to the palace when Kham-Keut fell sick and died of dropsy after a three years' reign.

Death of Nang-Keo-Phimpha (1438). Then there was an ex- 669
plosion of hatred against Nang-Keo-Phimpha. This death was 643*
seen as a /63/ punishment inflicted on the kingdom by Heaven for 175*
having accepted a usurper. Anger got the better of fear, and the ministers arrested the princess, tied her to the rock of Pha-Dieou and had her shot. "Her body was abandoned to the crows and vultures."

SAI-TIAKAPHAT (1415), KING 1438-1479. 645

The Council of Ministers at once set out to choose a new king 175*
643*

557 the people, and finally took a major part in the direction of the king-
643* dom's affairs. Thammikarath was wounded in his paternal pride,
175* would not countenance this premature interference in his royal prero-
/578/ gatives, and treated his son as a rebel (1621).

OUPAGNOUVARATH (1598), KING 1622-1623.

669 Supported by the majority of the ministers and by /101/ one of
578 his brothers, Mone-Keo, Oupagnouvarath entered into an open struggle
643* against his father, defeated the troops who had remained faithful to
175* the latter in bloody battles, and had himself proclaimed king in Vientiane on the "Sunday, first day of the crescent moon of the fourth month of the year 984" (1622). Three months later, Thammikarath was killed at his orders, together with his last partisans, in Pha-Deng. The epilogue of this somber family drama was not long in coming, for Oupagnouvarath died the following year under unknown circumstances.

662 With his death the intrigues for the crown began all over again,
175* and during a new period of nearly fifteen years, which the confusion of the Annals obscures as if intentionally, princes succeeded one another in Vientiane without any reference point for the chronicler and without any probable date which would make it possible to establish even an approximate chronology.

PHOTHISARAT II, KING 1623-1627.

643* We may nevertheless agree that it was one of Sene-Soulintha's sons
175* who seized power in 1623 under the name of Phothisarath (a fact which further complicates this imbroglio).

/102/ MONE-KEO, OUPAGNAOVARATH, TONE-KHAM, VISAI, KINGS 1627-1637.

The national dynasty resumed its prerogatives in 1627 with, successively, Oupagnouvarath's brother Mone-Keo, Mone-Keo's son named Oupagnaovarath (?), and finally with the latter's two sons Tone-Kham and Visai. The last-named died in 1637 (1).

648* 1. It was fortunate for Lan-Xang that the Burmese had been
175* driven back by the Thais of the Menam and had abandoned all action in the territories once subject to the rule of Bureng-Naung. If this had not been the case the historian of today would doubtless be somewhat more clear as to the events of the time, but Lan-Xang would certainly have sunk permanently into anarchy and into the partitioning which

726 a few vestiges of his scattered troops and urged him to ask all his
648* neighbors for aid in order to make a supreme effort.
175* He addressed himself first to the king of Xieng-Mai, who gave him an out-and-out refusal. The king of Luang-Prabang offered him platonic consolation and a few officers whom he was never to receive. The emperor of Annam promised him an army, but without specifying any date or place of concentration. As for the king of Xieng-Khouang he preserved a prudent silence.

643* Chao-Noi, king of Xieng-Khouang. This latter, Chao-Noi, who
175* was to play a major role in the years which followed, has left the memory of a detestable prince. To be sure, he was confronted with a tragic situation and one fraught with difficulties which little by little caught him up in a close net from which he could not extricate himself, but he did nothing to force the hand of destiny and showed himself to be, if not cowardly, at least hesitant and without political sense at a time when events demanded decisiveness and courage.

He had succeeded, in 1791 at the age of twelve, his /171/ father Chao-Xieng who was a brother of Xom-Phou (1). He had soon freed

1. See above, p. 149.

/429/ himself from the guardianship of the counselor Phou-Ho-Xieng-Di whom the dignitaries of his kingdom had given him, and had at once manifested a brutal despotism towards his unhappy subjects whom he overburdened with taxes and vexations (repeated levies of first grade materials for the reconstruction of his palace, unjustified drafts of soldiers and continual abductions of children, for to expensive tastes he joined a passion for women).

●/662/ Phou-Ho-Xieng-Di had dared to complain to King Anou, and the latter had summoned Chao-Noi to Vientiane, but there the clever fellow had charmed his suzerain with his talents as a horseman, by training a horse which was reputed to be unmanageable. He had returned to Xieng-Khouang laden with presents and honors and had lost no time in having his childhood mentor assassinated.

648* The results of the Siamese campaign of 1827 were not such as to
175* displease him, for hatred for Vientiane was a tradition in his family. At first he therefore turned a deaf ear to the appeals of the wandering king. In a second message, after Anou had called on him to fulfill his duties as a vassal, he announced that two thousand men were being sent, /172/ although he ordered them not to arrive "until after

648* 175* bands, was given by the latter to Auguste Pavie who placed it in the Quai d'Orsay Library. See below, p. 295.

The chroniclers seem to attach considerable importance to these missions to China. They dwell on each of them in detail and mention the most futile incidents along the way, the names of the envoys, of the camacs and even of the elephants (2). Indeed, the

2. A third mission left Luang-Prabang in 1739. Intha-Som did not send the fourth until 1745 and instructed it to ask the emperor, by reason of the length and difficulty of the voyage, to accept four elephants every ten years. This proposal was accepted by the Chinese government.

support which Intha-Som was seeking from the emperors of Pekin was of capital importance /192/ to the principality, whose isolation on the peninsula was then complete.

643* 175* /662/ Conspiracy of Saia-Sane (1740). This long forty-nine year reign was a tranquil one at home, if we except one attempted rebellion, which was quickly repressed, by Saia-Sane, a son of Khamone-Noi. The conspiracy was discovered and Saia-Sane was at once arrested with his partisans and executed at the junction of Houei-Hop (around 1740).

Death of the heir apparent Tiao-Mang (1749). In accordance with the promise which he had made Thene-Sao when he took her as his wife, the king designated the eldest of the sons which this princess bore him as his successor, but the young man, who was named Tiao-Mang, fell into the water during a ride in a pirogue, took a chill and died of congestion at the age of fifteen (1749) (1).

1. Thene-Sao bore him three sons and a daughter, Thene-Kham bore him two sons and three daughters, and a third wife, Nang-Thep-Boupha bore him two sons and a daughter.

648* 175* 721 Difficulties with Annam (1750). At about the same time Intha-Som received a message from the king of Annam demanding the payment of tribute. Indeed, this monarch (2) regarded /193/ the

2. Le-Hien-Tong.